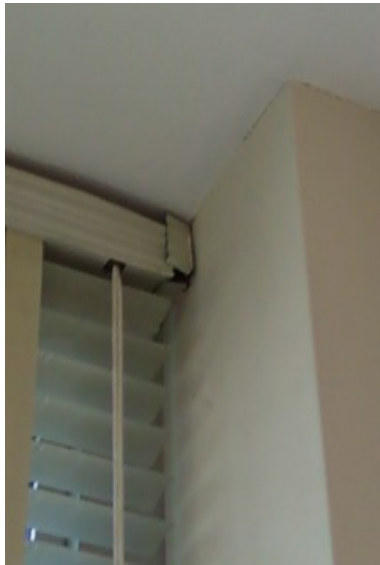




Safety Share – *Window Blinds*

On November 17, 2010, an HSS employee was adjusting the window blinds in his office. One might expect this low hazard, routine operation to require little or no second thoughts. We do this regularly, it's already installed in the window so we know it's safe, and we've never had a problem with them before. But as we all know, assumptions can be risky, as was the case this day. This was precisely what happened that day. As he was pulling on the cord to adjust the blind, the entire blind fell from its mounting in the window, striking him on the arm. This day, he got lucky, and suffered no injuries. But he did report it to his supervisor.



With the advent of our VPP efforts, the supervisor went with the employee to look at the affected blind. It was readily apparent that the mounting of the blind had failed. Together, the employee and his supervisor inspected all the blinds in their co-worker's offices. To their surprise, they found three other suspect blinds in a similar condition, one of which was in the supervisor's office.

The supervisor asked the worker to immediately submit the observed condition to the Health and Safety Issue Tracking (HSIT) system to initiate the corrective action tracking and notify the HSS FEOSH manager. The FEOSH manager provided the supervisor with the contact information for the Germantown Facility Operations Help Desk (GTNFacOpsHelpdesk@hq.doe.gov). The supervisor sent an email to the help desk along with a request that the specific blinds identified be repaired to prevent another incident. The supervisor also notified everyone in his office of the potential danger, warning them not to operate any blinds that appeared defective. Germantown Facility Operations fixed the blinds the next day.

As a final step, inspection of the blinds will be added to our quarterly work site inspections. In the meantime, this note is being distributed as a heads up to all workers in HSS to look closely at those routine things you do. Being alert and cautious at all times is not a bad thing.

In this case, a simple operation could have had a disastrous outcome. We have systems in place now to respond to identified conditions, but those systems will only work when everyone works together. If you're not already familiar with the HSIT, please ask. If you're a supervisor or manager, and a worker identifies an issue, please be proactive in addressing the concerns. If you're an employee, don't be afraid to raise the issues and ensure your managers and supervisors help you get action. We would all prefer to identify risks and take action before they make themselves evident.

Brought to you by the HSS VPP Safety and Health Committee

